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Modern Investigations on Ancient India.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED IN BERLIN MARCH 4, 1854

BY

PROFESSOR A. WEBER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

FANNY METCALFE.

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE,
14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON;
AND
20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.
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1857.

I shall have the honour of speaking to-day upon the present results of Indian studies which can still measure their age by years; scarce seventy having passed since the first direct translation from the Sanscrit was made by a European and only about fifty since the attention of the scientific world in Germany was first turned to the subject.

It was in the year 1765 that the East India Company by the treaty of Allahabad acquired Bengal, their first sovereign possession. From that time they resolved to govern their new subjects according to native laws. This caused Warren Hastings, then Governor General, to have drawn up by the aid of eleven Brahmans an epitome of the most important law books which was translated through the Persian into English and appeared in London 1776 (under the title of Code of Gentoo law). In the preface (p. 74) Halhed, the editor, gives the first detailed account of the Sanscrit the original of these books, not from his own knowledge but simply from the communications of the Brahmans. The first who thoroughly mastered the language was Sir William Jones the enthusiastic admirer and connaisseur of oriental poetry who arrived at Calcutta in the year 1783. His zealous efforts were crowned with success in the formation there of the Asiatic Society which from that time by their „Asiatic Researches“ became the centre of all scientific investigations concerning India. The first direct translation from the Sanscrit, the „Bhagavadgîtâ“,

a philosophical episode from the great epic „Mahâbhârata“, was published in 1785 by a young merchant, J. Wilkins and two years later in 1787 a second, the book of fables „Hitopadeça“. He as well as Sir William was struck with the intimate connection between the grammatical structure and lexicography of the Sanscrit and those of the old classical languages, and Sir William soon arrived at a rational conclusion upon the subject. In the year 1789 appeared his translation of the subsequently world-renowned drama, Çakuntalâ, the delicate grace of which aroused the highest concern for a literature possessing such treasures. An epoch of the greatest interest now commenced in India. Grammars, text-editions and translations strove with each other for the highest rank. Sir William Jones who died in 1794 was replaced by H. T. Colebrooke, a man of rare penetration and incredible industry who was perhaps more thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Sanscrit than any other European before or since, and together with him by the still living and venerable H. H. Wilson who in the yeat 1819 published the first Sanscrit dictionary of which the third edition is now being prepared.

In Europe too the liveliest interest was awakened; the „Çakuntalâ“ had also been received with enthusiasm. In the philosophic mysticism of the Hindoos it was believed that the original source of true wisdom had been discovered. The continental blockade hindered for a considerable time the importation of books from India and England. But by means of an English prisoner an officer of the name of Hamilton (afterwards Buchanan) who studied the Indian manuscripts which were to be found in the imperial library at Paris, several learned men were at once initiated into the study of the Sanscrit; among them was a German whose name is well known to us, Frederick Schlegel; his essay which appeared in the year 1808, „Upon the Language and Wisdom of the Hindoos“ disclosed at the period of which we are speaking, rich treasures, and founded in itself an epoch by proving the possibility of attaining Sanscrit without the help of In-

dian teachers. From this time Germany became the cradle for the study of Sanscrit, more particularly through the exertions of two celebrated men, A. W. v. Schlegel and Francis Bopp. Schlegel and his school, where the name of Lassen appears with great distinction, took upon themselves the restoration of critical texts and the thorough investigation of Indian literature and antiquities. Bopp on the contrary occupied himself entirely with the language, in which direction he worked with a creative result in a double sense, partly in making the study of the Sanscrit generally available by his well arranged grammars, by a glossary and by publishing the text and translations of several episodes from the Mahâbhârata, partly by his investigations into the connection of the Indo-European languages, which laid the foundation of the science of comparative grammar, and from which (in union with Jacob Grimm's German researches) we date the commencement of a new era in our study of languages in general.

It seemed in fact after the first enthusiasm had passed and when it appeared that Hindoo literature had little to show equal, or at least resembling the „Çakuntalâ" and „Bhagavadgîtâ", as if the linguistic results would be the chief acquisition gained by these studies, and that their own importance to the history of the culture of the Hindoo people would be of but small value. The first hopes of great advantages in the latter direction were disappointed, and the interest in the researches upon this subject was beginning to flag, when a new light was thrown upon it by the acquisition of the Vedas, the oldest sacred writings of the Hindoos.

Till then, only the literature of the last period of Hindoo development was known which with every delicacy, tenderness and depth in some branches still in general shows the Indian mind too much in its degeneracy and decay; but from the time when, by the exertions of F. Rosen, a scholar but too early taken from us, the way has been opened to those old songs of the Vedas, the oldest records of Hindoo literature, (i. e. from the year 1838 when his

translation of the first eighth part of the hymns of the Rigveda appeared) we date again a new period in Indian studies, especially since almost contemporaneously by the liberality of the King of Prussia the Berlin library received rich treasures in Vedic MSS. In Germany as in France, England and America and even in India itself, new zeal, an active and lively interest in this field is manifest, and that especially by the patronage of the Directors of the East India Company who, with distinguished appreciation of the scientific and practical importance of these studies stimulate and encourage them in every way, by giving aid to the publication of text-editions in India as well as in England and even in Germany. As yet indeed all is in its commencement, its growth, the number of labourers is small and the work to be accomplished is stupendous, but already the outlines and boundaries may be distinctly defined. May I but be successful in the following pages, in bringing clearly before you, what Indian study has already effected and what tasks still lay before us.

In the first rank stand the results already obtained with regard to the primeval history of the Indo-European race. The comparison of the grammatical formation of the Sanscrit, especially as it appears in its oldest form in the Vedas, with the Celtic, Greek and Latin, with the German-Lettish-Sclavonian and Persian languages, teaches us, that the structure of all these languages has one common foundation; moreover the gradation of forms and sounds directs us to the Sanscrit as the language which taken altogether has retained the most primeval form and has adhered the most tenaciously to that parent ground. This original language thus disclosed by the identity of the grammatical forms, naturally supposes and demands that at the time when it was a living and spoken language, the people speaking it must also have been one; the different nations, as well as their languages appear thus, as the result of a gradual separation from the original Indo-European race and its language, indeed so much so that the greater or less similarity of the sounds and forms of the

several languages to each other and more exclusively with reference to the Sanscrit gives us a clue as to whether this separation from the parent stock took place at an earlier or later period. The deficiency of all historical testimony for that early time is by this means made good for each people by the form of its language which affords a conclusive objective evidence distinctly confirmed by the geographical relations which meet our view when the historical period commences. — If the grammatical relations and inflexions are only the skeleton of the language and therefore afford us no direct picture of its life or even of the life of the people speaking it, the words themselves, the lexicographical treasure of a language, on the contrary are as it were the flesh clothing the skeleton, the nerves giving it vitality. In this way we may conclude that words, entirely or partly common to those languages, and the objects thus designated, were already either abstractly or positively the property of the earliest people, while the agreement of only some of those languages in words which are wanting in others is a sign that the things or ideas thus designated belong to a time succeeding the separation already effected. Further from the circumstance that the Sanscrit has preserved a great number of roots which have been lost in the other languages, we are enabled to discover in a great mass of derivatives besides their traditional meaning up to this time purely metaphorical, also their primary signification, and thus we obtain an idea of our forefather's style of thought and see how naively they have given the most significant names to so many different objects. Finally an acquaintance with the old songs, habits and customs of the Hindoos at the Vedic era promises even to afford us a means of determining the religious life of that early period, giving us an idea of their conception of the divine powers and forces in nature, in as much as there we find again a great proportion of such conceptions as are known to us from the Greek, Roman and German mythologies the roots of which thus appear to have existed already in that common primeval time. Here certainly much is wanting in

precision and the investigations on this point are as yet the least conclusive, the greater part being still left to conjecture.

We will try then as concisely as possible, to bring before the mind a picture of this period, as far as our present acquaintance with the subject allows.

The common use of words designating kindred, proves to us that the domestic life occupied with our forefathers a very prominent position; we find recurring, in almost all Indo-European languages, not only the same expressions for parents, children, brothers and sisters, but also for brothers and sisters in law and even for more distant relations. Etymology by means of roots still extant in the Sanscrit teaches us, that father signifies — the Protector, mother — the Arranger, brother — the Helper, the Bearer, sister — the Careful one, daughter — the Milker, and thus we arrive at the simplest patriarchal relations. Active pastoral occupation is designated by the common names of the cow (the slow walker), the ox (the vigorous), the goat, the bull, the sheep, the sow (the prolific), the horse etc. The dog (speed) protected the flocks, the wolf (the destroyer) the bear (the shining one, from his coat) was their terror. The mouse (the thief) stole the stores, the gadfly buzzed, the gnat stung, the serpent crawled, geese, ducks, doves, wood-peckers, cuckoos, chattered cooed and sang, the cock crowed. The agile hare bounded, the boar grubbed up the earth. The dwelling was secure provided with doors. Vehicles and boats served for conveyance over field and stream. The fields were cultivated with ploughs — barley and wheat produced meal and bread. Clothes, domestic utensils and weapons were there in abundance. Swords — spears — knives and arrows were manufactured of metal. Intoxicating mead incited to joyous songs; large shells and reeds served for music. War was a delight, the pride of race so powerful, that the word barbarian (stammerer) as expressive of foreigners, speaking another language belongs to that early period. The conquered enemy became the slave. At the head of the many stood the director, the

protector, the lord, the leader in battle, the judge in peace. The country was mountainous and rich in streams; the forest offered friendly shade, the oak was its chief ornament. The winter seems to have been severe, for besides this term only that of spring (the renewer of verdure) recurs. The sun was revered as the principle of growth, the gladdening glance of the rising sun was eulogised; the moon served for the mensuration of time. The stars were regarded as fiery archers; and the Great Bear, (the Greek name of which arktos, signifies properly speaking merely the shining one), glittered amongst them with peculiar brilliancy. Thunder, lightning and storm, rain, fog and wind, inspired the timid with fear and terror. The all surrounding heaven, in whose name Varuṇa we trace again the Vedic source of the Greek word Ouranos, was regarded by our forefathers as the Father of the Universe, the earth as the mother. The gloomy god of the clouds that had hid the golden herd of stars and sunbeams and the fruitful floods of heaven in his dreary abysses was conquered by the arrows of the god of lightning and the imprisoned flock set free. The companion of the god of the thunderbolt in this combat was the wind, pictured as a dog, chasing and driving the clouds before him. Another mission devolved upon the wind in the same form, serving as a faithful guide to lead by safe paths the departed souls of the blessed dead, now metamorphosed into air, to their place of final destination; for the conception too of a life after death, of a world of the blessed, divided from this world by a broad river (the atmospheric stream) belongs already to that primeval age. The mighty and incomprehensible forces of nature aroused in man the consciousness of his weakness, and in acknowledgment of these powers he bent the knee, he brought them his offerings and his hymns, pictured them in pleasing or cruel and hideous forms, and endowed them accordingly in his imagination with those human attributes that surrounded him. Lastly, to this period belong the conceptions of a Manu, a first man and first father, and of a great flood, destroying and swallowing up all, in which he alone

was saved. Both of these conceptions are to be found again among the descendants of Shem, and they are in connection with other linguistic elements to be regarded as a proof, that their children at a still earlier period were also connected with the Indo-European race, from which however they must have separated before the language common to both had attained to any grammatical fixedness.

In the picture just now drawn, positive signs are after all almost entirely wanting, by which we could recognize the country in which our forefathers dwelt and had their common home. That it was situated in Asia is an old historical axiom; the want of all animals specifically Asiatic in our emuneration above seems to tell against it, but can be explained simply by the fact of these animals not existing in Europe, which occasioned their names to be forgotten or at least caused them to be applied to similar animals; it seems however on the whole that the climate of that country was rather temperate than tropical, most probably mild and not so much unlike that of Europe, from which we are led to seek for it in the Highlands of Central-Asia, which latter has been regarded from time immemorial as the cradle of the human race. The Celts were undoubtedly the first to tear themselves from this original home, since their language has something grammatically unfinished and is considerably removed from other Indo-European languages. The so called Pelasgians followed, afterwards dividing into Greeks and Latins, then the German-Sclavonian race, subsequently dividing into the Germans and the Prussian-Lettish-Sclavonians. The Persians and Hindoos, or as they call themselves, the Aryas remained together in that primeval home the longest.

We must regard as a second advantage to be derived from Indian studies, the light which has lately broken in upon us and still promises to increase, as to this latter time, when the later Indians and Persians still dwelt together — that is to say the Aric period — and as to the history of the Persian people and of Western Asia in general. It has only been possible by the help of the nearly allied Sanscrit,

to understand the language of the old sacred writings of the Persians, as well as to decipher the cuneiform inscriptions of the Persian kings at Persepolis which are written in almost the same language, and by these again the monuments differing in language of the Assyrian kings at Niniveh. The enormous field that has thus been opened to the historian and antiquarian in this department and which will still yield the most unexpected disclosures in the history of the ancient world, is therefore an indirect acquisition derived from Indian studies, and would be without this aid but a barren expanse as far as our contents of the inscriptions are concerned. But not less significant are the discoveries brought to us by our comprehension of these sacred writings of the Persians with regard to the period of their life in common with the Hindoos, to the Aric period. It appears from them that to the ancient gods — mere symbols of natural powers — ethical conceptions had been added, and that especially the ancient god of heaven, Ouranos, Varuṇa had become an omniscient judge of the deeds of men by means of his heavenly messengers. The separation of the Aric race into Persians and Hindoos seems to have been principally brought about by the influence of these religious elements, in as far as the Persians placed their ethical deities in the foreground and reverenced them exclusively while the Hindoos, on the contrary, along with these also retained their old conceptions of the gods as symbols of the powers of nature, and this in such a way that the worship of these latter by degrees wholly suppressed the worship of the former who by the removal of their more especial votaries assumed a less and less positive character. Among the Persians on the other hand, whose religion as they themselves declare, was very probably reduced to a positive system by a single gifted individual — Zoroaster — the deities, till then symbolical of nature were classed among the evil demons, exactly corresponding to the way in which in later times the heathens converted to Christianity transformed their gods into evil spirits, witches and devils. Some of those gods, whose deeds had already become too

much personified and embodied in myths were considered, as among the Greeks, as human heroes and sages of the earliest times and placed foremost in the history of the race. These are the old kings of the later Persian epic of Firdusi in which their deeds mixed up with real historical reminiscences have been described in such glowing and lively colours.

We now come to India itself, to the disclosures that have been made by means of Indian studies as to the historical development of the Hindoo Aryas, of that people whose sacred language even now approaches the nearest to the language common to our forefathers, and whose entire intellectual life ought therefore likewise to afford us even now a faithful representation of their life. But certainly as the Hindoo now is and as he appeared to us before the Vedas were known, to have been from old times, it must be confessed we could only with great reluctance accept his way of living as a true image of the life in those most ancient times. Since however we have learnt by the help of the Vedas to trace him from his former simplicity to his present degeneracy, we can with tolerable confidence assert that we have before us in the habits of the Hindoos in the ancient Vedic era a most faithful mirror of the life common to our Indo-European forefathers, in which taken as a whole nothing essential will be different, though some new traits in particular instances may have been added.

The most ancient songs of the Vedas show us the Aric people still dwelling beyond, or at least only on the north-western frontier of, India, in the district between the Kabul and the Indus as well as in the Panjâb. From the literature of the people we can trace step by step their removal from this point, and their distribution throughout India. The way led northward from the great desert of Marwar, from the Çatadru, the present Sutledj to the Saraswatî, a river, subsequently held in high veneration, that loses itself in the sands of the desert; here there must have been a long halt as may be concluded from the great sa-

credness of the place in later times when it formed the boundary between the brahmanical state gradually developing itself in Hindostan, and the Aric races of the west that still adhered to the free habits of their fathers. The stream of immigration progressed along the shores of the Yamunâ and the Ganges, and at the time of Alexander the Great or as may well be supposed 2—300 years earlier at the time of the reformer Buddha, the whole country as far as Bengal was not only the undisputed possession of the Aryas, but moreover in the full splendour of the brahmanical legislation, so much so that not even a remembrance on the part of the Hindoos as to their immigration is reported by the Greeks. Before the arrival of the Aryas India was inhabited by rough, uncivilized yet powerful tribes which have maintained their freedom even to the present time in some of the mountainous valleys of Hindostan. Most assuredly these tribes did not cede their country to the invaders without a struggle, being treated moreover by the latter as barbarians in the most debasing manner and reduced to the most despicable position under their government; we find frequently the most distinct traces of their resistance; and we may according to this standard measure how long a time was required for their complete subjugation. From the Kabul to the Sadânîrâ, from the western to the eastern frontier of India are 20 degrees 300 geographical miles which had to be conquered successively; we shall therefore be able to give at once 1000 years as a minimum for the space of time occupied in gaining possession — in completely cultivating — and in brahmanizing this extensive tract of land; and we are led by this to somewhere about the year B. C. 1500 as the time when the Hindoo Aryas were still living on the Kabul and as the time from which their further advance towards India itself began. This is without doubt a rough calculation but in this case for lack of other historical testimonies, the only possible one. It is true that astronomical data have been made use of with nearly the same result, but these data are no proof, simply because they are derived from a di-

vision of the heavens which does not belong originally to the Hindoos themselves but was borrowed by them from the Semitic race, perhaps from the Babylonians. The commercial relations between the latter from the Persian Gulf to the mouth of the Indus seem already in ancient times to have been of an active character. Also the Ophir of the Bible where the Phenicians used to trade at the time of Solomon, that is to say B. C. 1000, is to be sought for there, with the Abhîras; for the merchandise which they fetched from Ophir, gold, silver, jewels, sandal wood, ivory, apes and peacocks, not only bear in part Sanscrit names but are in fact purely Indian, so much so indeed that they suggest a land commerce from the Indus to the south coast of Malabar. With the above calculation which rests entirely upon the external geographical position, agrees also the result at which we arrive by a comparison of the domestic, political and religious situation of the people in the Vedic era with the same in the subsequent Buddhist and Greek eras. For by means of their literary remains we are able to trace their internal development just as gradually as their geographical distribution; and here too we may assume with certainty, that a period of one thousand years is not too long for the mighty changes that meet our view.

The domestic and civil life of the Aryas stands in the Vedic songs upon a very patriarchal footing, their pursuits being simple and thoroughly natural. Agriculture, the breeding of cattle, and war form their occupations, grain and herds their riches. The country is fruitful enough to invite them to fixed dwellings and to render a nomadic life unnecessary. The families dwell apart or in small communities scattered over the country; frequent combats take place between the several tribes and are conducted with determined courage and thirst for plunder. Every man is priest in his own house, kindling the sacred fire with his own hand, praising the gods for their aid or forbearance, petitioning the good for further assistance, for blessing on the seed, the herds and children, and beseeching the terrible

to divert from him their fearful forces and direct them against his enemies; praying for annihilation of his own guilt and for immortality as the reward of his good deeds. The position of the women is one full of honour, priestesses and queens occupy a prominant place. In love, the tender sentimental element, which brings the modern Indian poetry so near to our own, is wanting, but luxurious voluptuousness is also unknown, and it bears throughout the natural stamp of passion. Marriage is sacred, monogamic; husband and wife are both designated rulers of the household, and approach the gods in united supplication. The horse is tamed for riding and the poet sings with fire the courage of the first mortal that ventured to bestride him. Navigation is diligently pursued, which could not but be expected in a district so intersected by streams as that of the Indus; even voyages on the open sea are hinted at. Merchants are mentioned, but seldom. Gold-vessels and beautiful textures are extolled as well as strong carriages. Dice-playing was passionately pursued, music and dancing joyously practised principally by women. Besides the mead they had discovered the intoxicating power of the juice expressed from the asclepias acida, the soma-drink; this highly prized beverage was held in such esteem that it was only used in the sacrifices to their gods, in order to give to them strength in their combats with the evil powers of nature. At these sacrifices the hymns of the poets were either sung or spoken, just as at the other offerings which consisted in simple gifts of rice, butter, milk and the like, or even of animals, especially of goats. These are in fact the very hymns of the Vedas now in our possession and from which as from an unsullied spring this reflection of the then Aric people meets our view. Their testimony is a thoroughly unadulterated one, their authenticity not to be doubted. It is true they have only at a much later period assumed their present form, ie. in Hindostan itself and moreover as it appears at its Eastern extremity, at the time when the kingdom of the Kosalas and Videhas was in its prime, which we might perhaps fix

though certainly quite hypothetically about 2—300 years before the appearance of Buddha, that is to say in the seventh or eighth century before Christ. Every direct evidence too is wanting as to whether this compilation had been already a written or, as till then most certainly, a verbal one. The latter is even the most probable, for though the Hindoos really may then have already possessed their written characters, originally derived from the Semitic race, still in the so called Brâhmaṇas, works belonging partly to that very period of compilation and serving as commentaries to those hymns, several expressions are to be found which can only be explained by the supposition that their tradition was indeed only an oral one; for instance the measures and directions are generally given only by the terms — „thus high" — „here" — „there" — to which the pantomimic movement of the teacher's hand must be supplied. Still in spite of all this it may be believed with tolerable certainty, that in the text of these songs no positive alterations have been attempted, but that they are presented to us on the whole in the same form in which they were originally composed. The reason for this assumption lies in the fact, that when the Aric people forsook their ancient homes to wander to the east, they took with them the songs in which they called upon their gods for assistance and sung their praises. These songs served also in the new home for a like purpose, and they attained gradually greater importance, more positive sacredness, and hence a greater amount of care in the preservation of their tradition, the further the people removed, the more distant and the longer the separation grew from the circumstances under which they had arisen, the more unintelligible they became. In like manner the importance of the individuals increased with whom their knowledge particularly rested. — These were the families of the old bards themselves, who had preserved the text of the old sacrificial songs, the tradition of their origin, and the explanation of their obscure words and expressions. If sacrifice occupied amongst the Aryas already in ancient times a very important

position, it assumed a far greater significance in Hindostan as the positive external mark of separation from the aborigines. Opposed to the savage character of the latter, the religious inclinations of the Aryas (by which they distinguish themselves in the world's history above all peoples with the exception of the Jews) found in sacrifice its immediate expression and point of union; the old sacrificial customs were therefore not only most carefully preserved, but also considerably increased, the ritual completed and established in its minutest details, and the symbolical connexion of the several sacrificial rites with the texts and songs belonging to them became an object of great care and studious reflection. Fixed sacrifices were brought morning and evening, at each change of the moon, at the commencement of the three seasons, at every important period of life, as well as on a great number of different occasions; and it soon became impossible with the multitude of details to be observed that every body should offer his own sacrifice; sacerdotal families were in course of time formed from those old families of the bards who had preserved the religious songs, and the rites appertaining to them and then further completed them; they were considered as alone in possession of the true sacrificial wisdom, applying it to the use and profit of the masses in their offerings, and without whose aid the latter could neither prosper nor be agreable to the gods; they kept their knowledge secret, imparting it only to each other and in time succeeded not merely in securing it to themselves alone, but even in becoming the earthly representatives of the gods, elevated just as much above the rest of the people, as the people on their part were elevated above the aborigines. This was the rise of the brahmanical caste, the name of which is derived from „brahman", the prayer, therefore signifying those who occupy themselves in prayer. The works which represent the collective doctrine of sacrifice in its symbolical, dogmatical and ritual connexion with prayer and in which is already contained the germ in a great measure

of the later Indian literature, bear also the same name (brâhmaṇa) but declined in the neuter.

Truly, as the dispersion of the Aryas over India had not been effected without violent resistance, so also did the aspiring power of the Brahmans find much opposition among the Aryas themselves. In the traditions of a later period several kings are mentioned, who had ventured with ruthless hand to rise agains the „human gods" as the Brahmans designated themselves. Yet in vain; according to the principle, — Divide and govern, the latter had managed to divide the remaining Aryas into two parts inasmuch as by their help the families and retinues of the old petty chieftains and kings increased by degrees the privileged position which they had already occupied through riches and power in their ancient homes, so that the rest of the people fell into a sort of subjection to this royal warrior-caste exactly corresponding to that in which the latter stood to the priests. There are in the Brâhmaṇas very naive passages upon the intentional bringing about of this separation. In course of time this caste-system was regulated in the most minute manner; and the laws fixed upon for the half castes arising from mixed mariages were stringent and almost cruel, in order to prevent and render impossible to the lower castes, especially the aborigines every free movement, every slight influence and inroad upon the brahmanical state. Thus the Brahmans succeeded in forming a hierarchy which has scarcely had its parallel, and which already in the 5th or 6th century B. C. had taken root so firmly that even the growth and opposition of Buddhism which about this time opened the sacred order to all classes without distinction, has only partially shaken it, yes, even later after long combats was obliged to leave the field and to abandon India, while that hierarchy itself exists almost unmoved to the present day.

Hand in hand with the development of the brahmanical state thus sketched in its outlines, and in a constant mutual relation to each other, the further growth of religious ideas had taken place. The most ancient songs

of the Vedas lead us as we have seen in part even up to the Aric period, when the Indians and Persians still dwelt together and worshipped deities which symbolised moral ideas, as well as those which symbolised the forces of nature. We have also already remarked that their mutual separation seems to have been a consequence of the preponderance which the Persians accorded to their ethical notions of the gods, in opposition to those which were mere symbols of the powers of nature. Among the Hindoos a gradual withdrawal from the former takes place in the later Vedic songs, a supplanting of them by the gods of nature which return to their old position, partly perhaps in new forms. New abstractions in course of time are again added, which are derived from ethical relations, but appearing to us more as the result of reflection than of positive religious feeling. The large number of these deified forms caused in the course of time speculations to arrive at greater clearness by dividing them according to their chief relations and rendering them subordinate one to another. The principle of this classification is, corresponding with the ancient origin of the deities, derived from natural observation; there are gods that work in heaven, in air, and upon the earth. The sun, wind and fire are recognised as their chief representatives, as in fact their rulers. But progressive speculation, strengthened by these previous investigations, seeks beyond these three, to arrive at a unity in reference to the cosmological primitive cause which in the end appears as the brahman — indeterminable — absolute — unlimited and therefore also impersonal. The eternal perpetuity of this being, as the all pervading spirit of the universe is in opposition to human individuality represented in sublime and inspired characters, yet so that the proud consciousness, yes, even the positive feeling of its union with the single individual spirits of the world, which in relation to it are as the drops to the ocean, comes before us as the highest point of speculation. But to attain this ecstatic blissful state, all the bands of personality, of the senses, of individuality must be loosed and set aside;

only he who neither wishes for nor knows more of the world, its pleasures and its pain, is capable of it. — Here lies the root of Hindoo asceticism and contempt of the world and of life which struck the lively Greeks so powerfully, though they in their consciousness of individual liberty ranked far above it. Of course such an excess of self devotion to the knowledge of the origin of all things was only the occupation of the few, mostly such as had withdrawn as hermits to a lonely forest life in order to be able to devote themselves to their reflections undisturbed. The remaining less energetic minds of the thinking portion of the community contented themselves with the assumption of the bare idea of a superior lord, of gods and creatures, without giving themselves any explanation of his origin etc.; to this was added the old hope of immortal life in the world of the blessed which however by degrees was essentially limited by the newly forming doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Lastly the great mass adhered to their ancient multiplicity of deities which answered the best for their present necessities; and of these deities those whose influence was the most direct and immediate, namely the gods of the air and earth occupied more decidedly the foremost rank; in this way they have experienced a great number of transformations and remouldings, indeed to such a degree that in most cases the transition from the old to the new form is scarcely to be traced. The resistance of the aboriginal Hindoos and the danger and insecurity to life was for a time the essential cause of the prominence given to the worship of terrible gods whose anger was to be averted. Moreover it is probable that by means of the aborigines many an heterogeneous element has found an entrance into the creed as well as into the language, the more so as in several instances where they had shown themselves either too powerful or particularly friendly disposed they were admitted into the brahmanical state as members of the third, if not of the second caste. The rich mythology that was thus in time created by the imaginative spirit of the people, began also on the one hand to transform the ancient deeds of

the gods into mythical historical traditions of antiquity, changing their names to those of human heroes; on the other hand it worked in the opposite direction, inasmuch as mortals occupying a prominent position appear clothed by it in a mythical garb as the sons of the gods and by degrees attain to the dignity of deities, until at last they rank with the gods themselves. The luxurious world of the gods pictured in the most sensual colours agreed well with the voluptuous life of the people whose ancient strict customs and simplicity may soon after their settlement in Hindostan have been expelled by the enervating influence of the new and hot climate and the tempting natural enjoyments surrounding them.

In the midst of this time of oppression by the brahmanical hierarchy on the one hand and of the luxurious voluptuous life of the people on the other appeared a man, giving himself the title of Buddha — the Awakened — and achieved a reformation of both upon a stupendous scale. He was the son of a king in Eastern India, bred in the greatest ease but aroused by reflection to a thorough persuasion of the passing character of all things earthly; he forsook his family, from that moment living upon alms, at first devoting himself to contemplation, and afterwards to the instruction of mankind. Decay and therefore separation and pain is the necessary condition of all existence; the origin of each new existence is caused by passion in a former existence; the suppression of passion is therefore the only means of avoiding new existence and its attendant pain; the hindrances to this suppression must be removed — these were the four certainties which, resting upon the already existing doctrine of the transmigration of souls, formed the starting point and goal of his creed. Truly, there was nothing new in this doctrine, on the contrary it was entirely identical with the very doctrines of the brahmanical hermits, yet the style and manner in which it was divulged by Buddha was new and unusual. While the former only taught in their forest hermitages, and accepted disciples from their own caste exclusively, Buddha wandered through-

out the country with his disciples from town to town, preaching his doctrine to the people, and receiving as his followers individuals from all castes without difference of birth, portioning to them their rank in the community only according to their age and knowledge, thus opening to all, even to the meanest, the possibility of freeing themselves from the fetters of their birth by their acceptance of his doctrines. This general tolerance, the mutual compassion which he preached alike to all belonging to this vale of sorrow, the practical universality of his doctrine has remained for all ages as the chief mark of his creed while its more speculative side, the doctrine of the final aim itself, namely the annihilation of personal existence has experienced various modifications. This was the first time in the history of the world, of which at least we have any knowledge, that a spirit was bold enough to break through all the barriers of peculiarities of race and nation and lay claim to a like lot for all men, though in this case the lot of universal sorrow. The consequence of this appeal to all, and especially to the suffering portions of the Hindoo people was indeed immense; and had not the severity of the moral precepts of Buddhism been on the one hand too burdensome, and on the other its peculiar tolerance and benignity a ground for its lack of defensive power, the force of the brahmanical faith had scarcely sufficed to withstand this blow. But the Brahmans soon knew how to lead back the voluptuous people to the images of its luxuriant fancy, to the worship of gods, the forms of whom appear before us from that time more and more exciting sensuality, or terror; and when in later centuries Buddhism found favour, on account of its universalistic tendencies, among the foreign tribes that for so long a period governed the Northwest of India, the Greeks and Indo-Scythians, the brahmans knew how to clothe their cause in national colours and place it before the patriotism of the Hindoo princes so that after the expulsion of those foreign rulers the native Buddhists too were driven from India by bloody persecution.—The influence which Buddhism has exercised

upon India has been after all a signally beneficient one, more especially in the earlier time of its purity. Of this we have an historical testimony of a singular kind from the third century B. C., namely rock-inscriptions of a buddhist king Piyadasi, which with some dialectic differences have been found identical in Eastern, Northern and South-Western India, the substance of which having for its sole object to impress upon all his subjects the importance of peace, of mutual esteem and toleration, of affectionate behaviour one to another, and of regard to the law; — most certainly rare matter for such monuments, when almost all such inscriptions of other kings, of which the history of the world has knowledge, speak only of bloody wars, of battles and of conquests.

Moreover these edicts are invaluable for the history of India also in other respects, as the earliest remains of Hindoo writing, in which the forms of the consonants betray a manifest relation to the corresponding Semitic letters (and from this point the Hindoo alphabets can be traced step by step till we arrive at the written characters now in use), — and further, from their not being composed in the so-called Sanscrit but in popular dialects already become very degenerate. For in the same way that the organization of the government and religion of the Aric people had become thoroughly altered in taking possession of their new territory in India, so was it with the language. The more extensive the progress was which the growing study of grammar, rendered necessary for the explanation of the ancient songs, made among the initiated, ie. the Brahmans, and the narrower and more decided the boundaries were which it marked out for the correct use in speaking, the more did the latter distance itself from that of the uneducated majority of the people. Thus a language of the educated, of the literature cultivated by them, and of the brahmanical instruction separated itself from the language of the people and became more decidedly removed from it in proportion as also the latter on its part developed itself; this was done principally under the influence of the conquered aborigines who were received as the fourth caste in the

brahmanical state, and who indeed gradually exchanged their own language for that of their conquerors, but not without introducing á great number of words as well as many phonetic alterations, especially an important modification of the pronunciation. The language of literature remained thus the sole property of the Brahmans and their scholars taken from among the other classes of the people and has maintained this position unaltered in its form to the present day, under the name of later origin „Sanscritâ“ (the refined, ie. language), while the languages of the people have gone through various stages in their development. The appearance of these latter in the edicts of Piyadasi intended for the entire people, and especially the form in which they come before us, show that at that time their difference from the Sanscrit was already a very important one, so that the conclusion which we arrived at as to the interval to be assumed between the immigration of the Aryas and the advent of Buddha obtains here again its fullest justification.

If as yet we have only been able to make use of native sources and (till the time of Piyadasi) have followed only an internal chronology we have now arrived at a period when foreign reports are placed at our command. How few soever they may be, all such reports are invaluable in the failure of every positive native chronology, and in connection with the few dates of the latter kind which from this time are presented to us from Hindoo inscriptions, they really suffice, to fix the general outline of the history of the Hindoo states. For the third century B. C. the external and internal position of India is laid before us with great precision from the Greek reports which are derived from the followers of Alexander the Great, or from the ambassadors of his successors to various Hindoo kings. The brahmanical civilisation had already forced itself to the extremities of the Dekkan, had also embraced Ceylon and was on its way to Further India and to the Indian Archipelago. India itself was in a very flourishing condition, although it was burdened by extremely heavy taxation. It consisted

of several large kingdoms, one of which situated to the East exercised a superiority over the others. The Greeks could not relate enough of the wonders of India; their reports with regard to the religious life and literature are however the least abundant, of the latter they scarcely communicate anything.

A new period indeed had commenced for India with the descent of Alexander the Great upon the Panjâb, as from that time it entered into far more intimate relations with foreign countries than had as yet been the case. A not unimportant part of Western-India was for more than 250 years under the government of Greek kings, and when Grecian influence was broken off on this side, in a not less significant manner did it choose another path, namely that of the sea commerce from Alexandria by which it continued in full activity till A. D. 6—700. Grecian influence working by this means has been much more important than for a long time has been believed; not only that Hindoo architecture (which certainly in time perfected itself independently), coining and such like arts adhered closely at their commencement to the Grecian models; but astronomy too, at least its scientific phase is based purely upon Grecian works (ie. translations from the Greek), by which a great number of Greek expressions have found their way into the Sanscrit; finally it is not improbable that even the rise of the Hindoo drama was influenced by the performance of the Greek dramas at the courts of Greek kings. Still more deep has been the influence of Christianity, also chiefly introduced by way of Alexandria, to which is to be attributed the idea of a personal, individual, universal God; and the idea of Faith, which is not to be found in India before this time, but which from this epoch forms a common type of all Hindoo sects. In the worship of Kṛishṇa, an ancient hero which now takes an entirely new form, even the name of Christ seems to stand in direct connection with it, and several legends of Christ, as well as of his mother the divine virgin, are transferred to him. — In an opposite manner, Hindoo philosophy too exercised a decided influence

upon the formation of several of the Gnostic sects then rising, more especially in Alexandria. The Manichaean system of religion in Persia is very evidently indebted to buddhistical conceptions, as the Buddhists in the freshness of their religious zeal, carried on by their principle of universalism had early sent their missionaries beyond Asia. The great resemblance which the Christian ceremonial and rites (which were forming just at that time) show to the Buddhistic in many respects, can be best explained by the influence of the latter, being often too marked, for it to be an independent production of each faith; compare the worship of relics, the architecture of church towers (vide the buddhistic Topes), the monastic system of monks and nuns, celibacy, the tonsure, confession, rosaries, bells etc.

By means of the flourishing trade with the West by way of Alexandria and through Persia, the Western coast of India now assumed considerable importance; here the mightiest kingdoms were formed, their sovereigns appear as the protectors of literature and poetry and their brilliant courts became the centres of attraction for poets and scholars. This is in fact the golden age of the so called Sanscrit literature in which the Sanscrit language attained its highest poetical finish, and produced the rarest pearls of Hindoo poetry. The fame of Indian wisdom was now diffused more and more throughout the world; Hindoo fables and tales were translated into Persian and then from this by the help of the Syriac and later of the Arabic into almost all the languages of Western-Asia and Europe. Hindoo astronomy and medicine were taught in the Persian and Arabian schools; even at a more recent period Indian philosophy has aided in the formation of Sufism, a pantheistic sect among the Mohammedans.

The North-West of India remained on the contrary in the almost continual possession of foreign tribes. Tartar races followed the Greeks; their rule, only for a short time interrupted by that of the Persian Sassanides, continued till the end of the 7th century when the Arabs obtained a firm footing on the Indus. While these Tartar races which

are called by different names united themselves to the Buddhists, whose doctrines became through them the national religion of almost the whole of Inner Asia so that even at present it is said to count more disciples than Christianity, while further also the first Arabian conquerors seem to have acted with great consideration towards their heathen subjects, a period began about the year A. D. 1000 of the greatest misery for India, from which it has only begun to recover in modern times under the protection of the British Lion. Mahmoud of Ghasna, a cruel fanatic first bore the banner of Islam as the standard of general devastation and waste in the favored plains of India. Afghan and other hordes followed him in unbroken succession, laying waste the whole of Hindostan with fire and sword. The invasions of the Mongolians, also remembered by us, followed immediately, and only, when one of their princes, Baber who has left us his own memoirs, had succeeded in founding a durable monarchy, do some years of repose occur under his successors, the so-called Great Moguls, especially under the truly great Akbar. Southern India too (whose brahmanisation has evidently been essentially influenced by the Brahmans fleeing thither, as moreover during that devastation they also retreated to Further India and the Indian Archipelago) was not able in course of time to withstand the Moslem force and only a few districts maintained their freedom under independent Indian princes. From the year 1498 when Vasco de Gama first sailed round Africa with a European ship, landing on the coast of Malabar, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the English have shared in the sovereignty of India, unfortunately for the most part in a manner which reflects shame and dishonour upon European civilisation. It is a mark of the vital force of the Hindoo people that these eight hundred years of suffering have not worked more destructively upon their character, but that they have as is undeniably the case retained elasticity enough to rise again during the last fifty years under the protection of English legislation.

I close this sketch of the historical development of

India with a cursory description of the course of the development of Indian literature. — We have already seen that a kind of dogmatic ritual commentaries in prose were added in the second rank under the name of Brâhmaṇas to the old lyrical songs of the Vedas. The so-called Sûtra (literally thread, band) form a third stage and comprise as a whole the materials diffused through the Brâhmaṇas in details only, and according as they relate to language, ceremonials or customs they are for us the first dawning of grammar and jurisprudence (ie. rights and duties). The study of grammar, gradually become necessary, in order to understand and to fix the old texts, has since remained a favourite occupation among the Hindoos, and they have done more in the recognition of the laws of their language, in lexicography, metrics etc. than any other people of the world; it is only in our own century, but still incited by them, that our Bopp, Humboldt and Grimm have advanced far beyond them. Next to the grammar stands their philosophy in which the Hindoos have unfolded the choicest blossoms of their mental power. Already among the later songs of the Vedas there are several speculative hymns which bear witness to a powerful depth and concentration of reflection upon the origin of things. Sublime nature, in the forest loneliness of which the Hindoo sages nursed their contemplative forces, awoke in them the consciousness of a soul in nature alike pervading all living, as well as the conception of the rapid change and poverty of each individual existence, the longing after its annihilation and incorporation in the common spirit of the universe. Conceptions of the sublimest character are united here to the most abstruse distinctions, till an intellectual movement similar to the Scolastics of our middle ages forces it to the narrow sphere of a fixed orthodox system. — The richness of nature in India had also early enough invited to the study of another science, namely medicine, the anatomical part of which received a very essential aid from the sacrifice of animals. — Astronomy was in ancient times entirely confined to astrology; first through Grecian influence, as has been already remarked,

has it risen to the rank of a positive science. Algebra seems to be a pure production of Indian sagacity, to which besides we owe our arithmetical ciphers. The Hindoos arrived at such great perfection in this science as has only been attained in Europe at the close of the last century, so that if such writings had been known among us one hundred years earlier than they did in fact appear, they would certainly have created a new epoch.

It was however Hindoo poetry which on the whole first attracted the eye of Europe to Hindoo literature. Assuredly the dramas as was at once perceived could only be regarded as forming the topstone; and therefore epic poetry, attributed according to Hindoo custom to a fabulous age, was looked upon as its commencement; the opinion that epic poetry should have formed the beginning of poetical creations with other nations as well, has been current for a tolerably long period. As however the lyric poems of the Vedas have now been ascertained as belonging to the most ancient period in India, the existing epics on the contrary — Mahâbhârata as well as Râmâyaṇa — in comparison, to a much later one, it is probable that the opinion will now be better received that the poetical performances of each people commence with the lyric. The drama among the Hindoos has arisen from dancing and singing of which of old they have been passionately fond, but as before alluded to, not improbably under the influence of Grecian models. They have arrived at singular perfection in sententious poetry, and in didactic, tale and fable literature. Moreover the metrical form is common to all the works of the so-called Sanscrit period, even to the scientific works; the reason for this lies plainly in the fact that at that time the language had ceased to be the general language of the people and only belonged to the circle of the educated who had acquired it by study.

Thoughout the entire Hindoo literature, although of less importance to the sacred writings of the Vedic period which have been handed down with the greatest care, we

meet, apart from the complete lack of an external chronology which can only be replaced by internal evidence such as the mention of names etc., with yet another very fatal evil. The climate of India is namely so destructive in its effects, that the preservation of literary documents is rendered extremely difficult, e. g. of the present existing copies not one perhaps is more than 4—500 years old; they must therefore be very frequently repeated. The consequence of this is, that in almost all branches of science or poetry where no other direct influence steps between, the more fortunate successor has completely supplanted his predecessor; the latter became superfluous, was therefore laid aside, no longer committed to memory, no longer copied. And thus almost everywhere we possess but the chief-works in which each branch has reached its culminating point and which serve as classical models, after which with more or less productive power modern literature has formed itself. Moreover the difficulty in the preservation of writings has also operated very injuriously upon the existing texts themselves, inasmuch as with the frequent copying many alterations and additions of a completely arbitrary nature have crept in, partly intentional, partly arising from the mistakes of the copyists. To this we have to add the fact that the transmission of many of them was originally purely oral, the writing down of the text occurring later, perhaps in different places simultaneously, so that some of the chief works of Hindoo poetry lie before us in different recensions varying greatly from each other. In most cases a satisfactory restoration of the original text is not to be hoped for; and only where ancient commentaries exist is the text in some degree made certain at least for the period of the commentaries themselves. From this it may easily be seen, how difficult is the task to be accomplished that lies before the Hindoo philologist, but just in the fact that so much untilled ground awaits cultivation, lies a chief charm of these studies, since with some amount of energy and perseverance some satisfactory results may easily be achieved. The work of criticism has as yet scarcely begun and still resembles the

settlements in one of the primeval forests of America; but in the same way that in the midst of these, within so short a term, flourishing cities have arisen, so it may be presumed clear light will before long arise upon the midnight darkness which until now has enveloped the history of Hindoo religion and literature.

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